

PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION INSPECTION: WORKFORCE FACTS

SERIES 1 | REPORT 3

MILITARY EXPERIENCE

API considers two years of military service equivalent to having a 2-year degree in technical discipline or engineering. Therefore, in the United States, pipeline construction inspectors often have a military background.

In Canada, only 3% of pipeline inspectors have military experience¹. Recruiters could look to this pool of people to start diversifying their hiring practices.

FAST FACT:

97% of pipeline construction inspectors have previous experience in the oil and gas industry

REFERENCES

¹ Jiva Consulting. (2019). *Pipeline construction inspection benchmarking survey*.

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Maturing pipeline construction inspector recruiting practices

TYPICAL INSPECTOR WORK HISTORY

According to a 2019 survey of 100 pipeline construction inspectors¹, the average inspector is a 54-year-old male who has worked in the pipeline construction industry for over 20 years (Figure 2). Of those 20 years, he has spent 10 years working as an inspector (Figure 3).

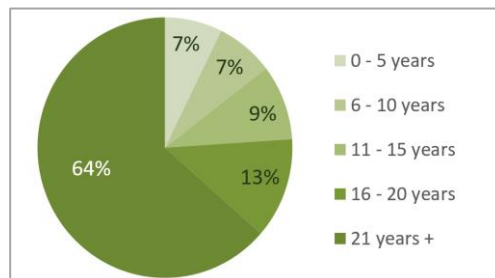


Figure 2. Years of experience in the pipeline industry.

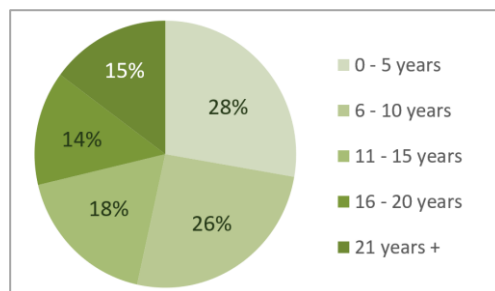


Figure 3. Years of experience working as a pipeline construction inspector.

As a young man, he likely started out working in the construction or oil and gas industry (Figure 1). After 10–15 years, he moved into pipeline construction. Once he had 10 years of pipeline construction experience, he became a pipeline construction inspector, a career change that did not require certification or additional training—his 10 years of pipeline construction experience served as a proxy for expertise in pipeline construction inspection.

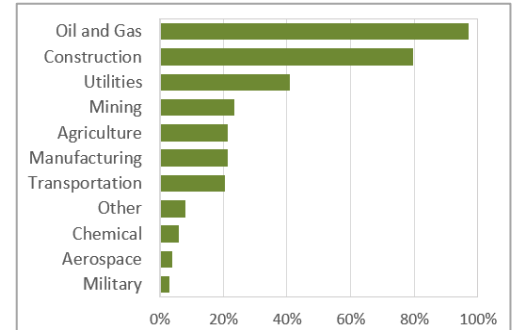


Figure 1. Pipeline inspectors work experience in specific industries.

PROBLEMS OF ONLY HIRING FROM WITHIN THE INDUSTRY

Today, most pipeline operators require their inspectors to have API 1169 certification. However, due to the lack of a structured training program (e.g., apprenticeship program), pipeline construction experience is still used as a proxy for training and/or expertise in pipeline construction inspection. The danger of this practice is that an inspector's skills and competence can be overestimated. Furthermore, the practice of only hiring from within the pipeline construction industry limits the pool of candidates from which to hire for this line of work.

IMPROVING RECRUITING PRACTICES

A pipeline construction inspector's work is crucial to ensuring that safe and reliable pipelines are built, operated, and maintained. To make sure there are enough inspectors to staff future projects, recruiters should intentionally draw from a broader, more diverse pool of candidates, such as those with experience outside the oil and gas and pipeline construction industries. These individuals have skills that are transferable to pipeline construction inspection.

In addition, understanding all the skills needed by pipeline construction inspectors can inform the development of a more structured development path for new inspectors.